



NEWS RELEASE

*Colville Tribes Fish & Wildlife PO Box 150 Nespelem, WA 99155 * (509)634-2110 * Fax: (509)634-2126

Contact: Randall Friedlander
Fish & Wildlife Director
Colville Confederated Tribes
(509) 634-2113

Have You Ever Seen a Prairie Chicken Dance

(Nespelem, Wash. June 17, 2016) – Every spring, male Columbian sharp-tailed grouse congregate at their mating grounds or (leks) in hopes to attract and successfully mate with a female. These birds compete for more than two months with other males through dancing displays, face-offs, and occasional sparring. Many people may be familiar with the round bustle dance or prairie chicken dance, this dance comes from the sharp-tail.

When females are ready to mate, they arrive on the outer edges of the lek. When a female walks onto the lek, aggressive displays of competition ensure between the males. Multiple males will chase the female around the lek until she has determined which male will suit her. Usually the most dominant males will breed most of the females, although many males will participate in breeding.

“Sharp-tails are ground nesting birds which lay 10 to 12 eggs in tall grass or short sagebrush and must hide while they tend eggs for nearly a month,” said Richard Whitney, wildlife manager for CTFW. “During that time, females are at their most vulnerable. If they do not have adequate cover, predators can easily kill and consume them. The majority of female sharp-tailed grouse die during nesting and brood rearing season; most males die in the spring lekking season while they are most exposed to predators,” Whitney said.

Columbian sharp-tailed grouse are a *Washington State Threatened Species*. The Colville Reservation is currently one of the last semi-stable populations of these birds in the state. “They have been and continue to be subjected to impacts from feral horses, livestock grazing, invasions of noxious weeds, and development,” said Whitney. “Grouse require high quality grassland and shrub steppe habitats for lekking, nesting, and brood rearing.”



(MORE)

CTFW currently estimates the population on the reservation between 220 to 250. They continue to work toward recovery of the species with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Bureau of Land management. Staff from the CTFW and partnership agencies traveled to Nevada, Idaho and British Columbia to trap, transport, and releases these birds in efforts to increase populations. If you would like to see a prairie chicken dance, go to CCT F&W Facebook page.

###